593 extended to his brothers' sons, especially if their father was dead. Following the same pattern, a man's sons who were away at work sent back money to their father who bought cattle with it, or spent it as the sons asked. It was clear in the 1930's that Ngoni men rarely sent money directly to their wives, though they frequently asked their father to give money to their wives and to buy for them cloth or needed household equipment.

562 Within the larger orbit of the male family responsibilities women had their more restricted but clearly defined sphere. At a woman's 844 confinement she was looked after by her husband's own mother, aided 593 by his other mothers and by his sisters if they were present in the village. At the 'coming out' of the new member of the family, ten to fourteen days after birth, the woman and the baby, bathed and ritually 562 cleansed, were seated on a mat outside the hut and presented to the male members of the father's family who gave small gifts to the baby. 846 If it was a boy, the father's mother generally carried it to the gate of 593 the kraal where the men were sitting, to present it to them as one who would eventually herd the cattle. On this occasion, or soon after, the [553] child's name was chosen, usually by the father's father, who prepared and gave to the mother a calf-skin or goat-skin for carrying the child in. The meat of the animal was cooked by the father's mother and a small feast was held for the father's mothers, sisters, brothers and their wives, and any others of the father's family who had helped in the confinement.[1] After the child had thus been acknowledged in its father's family circle, the mother took the baby to visit her own family, who also gave it presents.

593 During the rearing of the child, its father's female relatives assumed responsibility for giving the young mother advice. The father's mother 862 was expected to note the stage at which the child should be weaned, always if possible before the mother's next pregnancy. If the father's mother was unobservant, the other senior women of the husband's family would rebuke her and say 'Look now you are foolish because the child has been endangered. You are like an enemy to it.' These women then took the initiative and insisted on weaning the child. They said to the baby's mother 'We want to wean the child.' They made a paste of ground chillies and put it on the mother's breasts and covered them with a skin or cloth. The child was taken from her after it had tried to [853] suck and had been refused, and given to the father's mother or sister, who looked after it with the help of a nursemaid. It was fed on cow's milk, *amasi* (milk curds), and gruel.

The publicity given to the weaning and the initiative taken by the senior women of the husband's family were intended to inform others in [178] the village that the parents were now free to have another child. This was one aspect of the old Ngoni form of family planning and, in describing

[1] This feast was also held when a carrying cloth was given instead of a skin.

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because it was implied that her family had not given her good instruction and advice before marriage. 843 152

The birth of the child

When the senior women were satisfied that labour was about to begin, they took charge of all the preparations. They first sent out of the hut all the things belonging to the husband, his clothes, axes, spears, shields, and all the good mats, pots and baskets. Only old mats and clothes and pots were used during labour, and the hut was henceforth unclean and forbidden to the husband and to all males. The mother-in-law directed operations, with the help of her co-wives, the wives of her husband's brothers, widowed sisters of her husband, and some of the wives of the younger generation. The women who took an active part in the actual delivery were the older ones, but several younger women came to assist, or look on, and to encourage the young wife. 844 [422] [846]

She was made to sit on a mat leaning back against the knees of another woman, and the experienced 'midwives' were in front to receive the child in their hands. She was told to bear down and sometimes given a bark rope tied to the rafters to pull on. Though she might be in great pain, she was not expected to cry out or even to groan. The older women talked to her encouragingly, and wiped her face, or gave her a little water to drink. After the birth, the woman knelt forward leaning on her hands until the placenta was born. It was buried in a hole, in the floor at the back of the hut on the women's side.

The baby was washed by a senior woman and oiled with castor oil. The cord was tied with thread and the baby was given very thin gruel made of finger millet fried and ground. This was intended to act as a purgative to get rid of the mucus in the stomach. After this had been ejected, a tiny bit of the sour milk curds was put in the baby's mouth. [853]

The mother was washed and covered with a cloth and left to rest, while the women folded up the delivery mat

844 ready for burning, and generally cleaned up. The fire in the middle of the hut was rekindled to warm the mother and [262] baby, and gruel was given to the mother of millet flour, brought from the mother-in-law's hut where it had been cooked. With the help of the other women, the mother [853] washed her breasts with warm water and massaged them to make the milk flow, ready for the child to suck.

845 The other ethnic groups surrounding the Ngoni in Nyasa- [184] land considered it disastrous if a child was born face down or with the buttocks first, and twins were dreaded as ill omens. The Ngoni shared none of these beliefs and were particularly considerate for the mother of twins, often killing [262] a beast to give the mother meat and broth to increase her [853] flow of milk. The only notice the Ngoni took of the method of presentation at birth was that they gave a child a name [553] indicative of such a birth. They gave special names for the first and second twin born. If one twin died it was buried under the veranda of the hut and a smooth stone was placed [766] on top. This stone was used for sitting on, and the surviving twin was held on it when being washed.

Ritual and social uncleanness

846 From the time just before the birth took place the hut and 783 everything in it, and the woman and her new baby, were considered ritually unclean. If she had to leave the hut to answer the call of nature, she covered herself with a cloth from head to foot and avoided meeting anyone. She did no cooking herself until the ritual uncleanness was removed. Food was brought to her from her mother-in-law's hut or from her co-wives' huts, a special dish was used and washed separately, and she did not use her hands to eat with but a wooden spoon which was also washed separately. During the period of seclusion within the hut one of the senior women who helped at the birth slept in the hut with the mother and baby. No other young children were allowed to sleep in the hut, though they might come in to see the baby. All males

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854 533 When the baby cried, and it was not time to take him to his mother for suckling, the nurse girl jogged him up and down on her back, and walked to and fro with him endlessly, crooning little lullabies to soothe the baby. Some of these lullabies were traditional, handed down from the older women, others were improvised by a nurse girl or copied by her from another.

539 Two traditional lullabies, well know in the Northern Ngoni kingdom, were as follows:

Hush my child;
Never mind, never mind,
Hush my child;
Never mind, never mind,
There is a busybody gossiping
There is a busybody gossiping
Ho! We reap the maize

Kholwane, Kholwane, son of Makhwaphuna,
What are you carrying?
I am carrying the food of the baby
For someone may go about defiling it
In the dark paths.

The following is an example of an impromptu lullaby which I heard from a nurse girl in the Northern kingdom:

Bu, bu, bu, bu,
The baby cries for its nurse and not for its mother.
Bu, bu, bu, bu,
She is coming to make gruel for the baby.
There she comes,
Bu, bu, bu, bu;
The baby sleeps.

● 853 The reference to the baby's food in two of the lullabies belongs to the second special feature of Ngoni infant care, the provision of baby food to supplement the mother's milk, and the arrangements for artificial feeding if the mother had

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not enough milk, or was unable to suckle the child, or was ill or died. If a woman died in or just after childbirth, and the child survived, it might be suckled by the paternal grandmother or by another co-wife of the dead woman, but as a rule they resorted to artificial feeding, and often used it to supplement breast feeding. The father of the child took the food pipe of a beast recently killed, washed it and dried it, and handed it over to the women to rub with fat until it was soft and pliable. One end was then tied tightly to close it, it was filled with warm cow's milk, and the other end was tied loosely so that the child could just suck through it. It was kept well washed with warm water, and many infants were brought up successfully with this 'bottle'.

The babies were also given very thin gruel made of millet or maize flour, and curds and whey beaten up together. This was put in a very small gourd, decorated with drawings, with a spout to pour from, and a cover to keep flies and dust out.

Weaning

Studies of weaning in different cultures lay emphasis on the traumatic shock of separation from the mother, not only in terms of being refused the breast, but also of being removed to sleep elsewhere than beside the mother, and perhaps being sent away to stay with another relative.

In the Ngoni pattern of nurse-girl care and of supplementary feeding, especially after the first few months, it might seem that the actual weaning was less of a shock than in cultural situations where the baby was with the mother all day, carried about by her and never refused the breast if it cried. Ngoni women, however, and men too, all asserted that weaning was a shock to the child, even if it happened at two years old.

The reasons for this shock were partly that it was done all in one morning at one fell swoop, and partly that the child was sent away from the mother at night. The same nurse girl looked after it all day, but now took it more often to

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This breast is now bad'—and they spat downwards as they did when something was really bad. While the child was howling with fright and frustration, the mother's breasts were covered with a cloth. The child was then picked up and carried away in its carrying cloth to the compound of its paternal grandmother, or a widowed paternal aunt, attended by its own nurse girl. If it had a feeding bottle, or one could be made for it, it was given cow's milk, as well as gruel, and curds and whey. The Ngoni women believed that if a weaned child was given cow's milk it would forget its mother's breasts quickly, but they admitted that it was a conventional belief and not always justified.

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Social relationships involved in the birth of a child: Wife to husband's family

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Throughout the period of pregnancy, during childbirth and after, up to and including weaning, the mother of a new baby was made to feel her position as a stranger among her husband's relatives. Before marriage it had been impressed on her by her own family that, at any rate in the early years of marriage, she must be obedient and humble, not only to establish her own present and future position among her husband's people, but for the sake of the reputation of her own family from whom she was now separated. The key relationship in this cycle of pregnancy, birth, weaning and new conception was that between her and her mother-in-law. If she showed respect by being humble and obedient, she could establish a behaviour pattern which in the end rewarded her by giving her self-respect because she was doing her duty in accepting the authority of her husband's mother. It was no easy path for a high-spirited girl who had had freedom and indulgence in her own home. She knew however that these first few years of marriage and child-bearing were the critical ones. She could see for herself how women who had been married longer had more freedom from the authority of their mothers-in-law because they had learned how to

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252 The maize is shelled as required, the grains are pounded in a mortar, and then soaked in water for three or four days, if there is time. They are then pounded again, and the flour winnowed out. [831] The residue is ground between two stones. The husks obtained after [093] the first pounding are used as animal fodder, and in beer making. The diligent housewife pounds twice a week, each pounding lasting for about three hours. It is usual for a group of women living as [461] neighbours to pound at the same time, singing together.

[251] The maize flour is dried in the sun, and then put into a pot or basket until required for porridge or beer. Porridge forms the basis 262 of most meals, although in February and March there may not be enough maize left in the storehouses to make this possible. Adults [264] eat porridge in solid form, kneading handfuls of it between their fingers before eating, but infants are fed on fluid porridge made from [853] the ground flour. The herdboys in charge of the cattle may use the milk to make their porridge with. Cooking is women's work, but [842] men by themselves on a journey or working on the tobacco farms will cook porridge for themselves. Green mealies, usually fried, are eaten when available.

263 Relish is required to go with the porridge, the commonest relishes being pumpkin leaves and hibiscus leaves. There are in addition 222 many wild fruits and leaves searched for in the bush at their appro- 291 priate seasons, while the gardens provide pumpkins, cucumbers, 262 various kinds of beans and peas, and edible gourds. The most sought-after relish, and one of the most infrequently found, is meat. Chick- 262 ens are given to honoured visitors, while beef, mutton, pork, and goat meat are eaten when they can be found. Livestock other than chickens are killed for eating only on ceremonial occasions, such as [831] funerals or marriages, but owners not infrequently kill animals and sell the meat to raise money to pay damages, to finance a journey, or to obtain labour in the garden. Animals that die are usually eaten. Some people keep ducks, pigeons and tame guinea fowl, while such 235 game as is killed on the /13/ hunt is divided among the hunters and 224 taken home to be eaten. Owners of guns sometimes hunt by themselves and sell the meat.